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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

WEDNESDAY, October 18, 1939.

(For Broadcast Use Only)

Subject: "OCTOBER GARDEN JOBS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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October is a busy month for every home gardener. Garden jobs this month include a good deal of transplanting; cleaning up; burning weeds and diseased plants; storing dahlia roots and gladiolus bulbs; watering lawns and evergreens; gathering leaves for compost; and freshening the soil in your flower beds before frost sets in.

Let's take up each of those jobs briefly.

First, about October planting. You can transplant evergreens this month except in the most northern States. As soon as they're planted, give them plenty of water and mulch them with peat or thoroughly rotted leaves to protect them from freezing damage.

Then, as soon as the frost has caused leaves on shrubs to drop, you can transplant shrubs. Roses, lilacs, forsythia, hydrangea and barberry are shrubs that you can transplant in the fall. When you are transplanting shrubs dig far enough away from the base to get most of the roots. For the average 4-foot shrub, count on a root-spread of about 18 inches. Dig the new holes generously--about 6 inches larger on each side than the root-spread. Have the soil that you fill in around the roots finely pulverized rather than in clods or chunks. Never put manure or chemical plant foods directly on the roots; the chemicals may burn the roots. Instead, thoroughly mix a little of them in the soil.

Among the bulbs to put in this month are the fragrant colorful hyacinths, the deep blue grape hyacinths that make such vivid borders; the snowflakes with white petals dotted in green; the dark purple guinea-hen flower; the blue, purple or white squill; and the bright crocus.

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Many perennials that bloom in early spring will benefit by fall planting.

But you must transplant them early enough so they can establish themselves before the soil freezes. Primroses, bleeding heart, and phlox are some perennials to plant in the fall. Some of the annuals also do better if you seed them just before cold weather instead of waiting until spring. The seeds won't germinate until early spring, but then they will grow rapidly during the warm days of March and April. You can plant poppy, candytuft and larkspur, seeds this month in the sections of the country where it does not become extremely cold.

So much for planting in October. Now about storing your dahlia roots and gladiolus bulbs. Dig glads before the ground freezes and after the blades have ripened. After digging, lay the bulbs in an open sunny place for several days so they will dry before you take them indoors. Put them in shallow baskets or wire trays and keep them in a dry cool place where they will not freeze. Mice like glad bulbs so you may want to protect against mice by storing them in paper bags hung from the ceiling. Glad bulbs keep well during the winter if they are dry, well-ventilated and away from freezing temperatures.

Dahlia roots should come out of the ground not before but immediately after frost. Cut the stalks off 3 or 4 inches above ground. Then dig the roots with care. Leave the roots in the sun for a few hours and then place them in shallow trays or boxes of sand or peat moss where they won't dry out or shrivel. Dahlia roots also need storing in a dry cool, but frostproof, place.

October is a good month to dig up the soil in the garden so that it will soak in water more easily. After loosening the ground, you can scatter wood ashes, and bone meal over the beds. Dig the soil to a depth of at least 12 inches. Late in the fall build up the soil in a mound around the base of each rose bush so that excess moisture will run off. This prevents water from collecting around the stem and alternately freezing and thawing which may cause winter killing.

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Gardeners often ask whether to save or burn leaves in the fall. The answer is: Burn all diseased leaves or plants and burn weeds that may be dropping seeds these days. Then if you have room for a compost or leaf-mold pile where it won't be unsightly, save your leaves. Here's how to build a compost pile: Build a rectangular pile of leaves and add several handfuls of sulphate of ammonia to each 6-inch layer. Tramp the leaves down and soak them with water as you build. Keep a little hollow in the center to hold water. Leaves for compost must lie for 2 or 3 years and be turned at intervals. By the way, whether you decide to save or to burn leaves, keep them off the grass during the fall. They smother grass, especially new lawns just getting their strong fall growth.

Before the ground freezes apply mulch or rotten leaves to rhododendrons, laurel, azalea, and other broad-leaved evergreens. These plants need plenty of moisture all during the fall and winter. Mulch conserves the moisture and protects the roots. Rhododendrons and azaleas prefer an oak leaf mulch applied 4 or 5 inches deep; the decaying oak leaves keep the soil in the proper acid condition. The perennial bed, on the other hand, needs its winter cover of mulch after the ground freezes. That is to keep the temperature of the ground steady and prevent the heaving that comes from alternate freezing and thawing.

Well, here I've been doing all this talking about fall garden jobs and haven't even mentioned hot beds and cold frames. That's a story in itself and I'll save it for another day.

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